

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2261
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 10786

SONGKHLA 102 SENT ACTION AMEMBASSY BANGKOK BEING REPEATED TO
YOU FOR YOUR INFO:

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SONGKHLA 102

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINS, TH
SUBJECT: BANK BOMBED IN PATTANI

SUMMARY: DURING CONVERSATION MAY 16, PATTANI GOVERNOR THERMSAK
SAMANTARAT SAID HE THOUGHT SEPARATISTS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR BOMBING
OF THAI MILITARY BANK IN DOWNTOWN PATTANI MAY 15. GOV. SAID
SEPARATIST ACTIVITY HAD INCREASED MARKEDLY DURING PAST MONTH AND HE
WAS CRITICAL OF ROYAL THAI GOVERNMENT (RTG) FOR CONCENTRATING ON
BORDER OPERATIONS AGAINST THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYA (CPM) IN
COOPERATION WITH MALAYSIANS WITHOUT GETTING SIMILAR COOPERATION IN
EFFORTS AGAINST SEPARATISTS WHO HAVE SANCTUARY IN MALAYSIA. GOV
ALSO DISCUSSED THREE VIETNAMESE NAVY TROOPS WHO WERE HELD IN PATTANI
BEFORE BEING TRANSFERRED TO SONGKHLA. END SUMMARY

1. GOV. THERMSAK SAID IN CONVERSATION MAY 16 THAT HE THOUGHT
BOMBING OF THAI SOLDIERS BANK IN DOWNTOWN PATTANI MAY 15 WAS A
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POLITICAL ACT BY SEPARATISTS. HIS ANALYSIS IS BASED ON FACT THAT
WHILE LARGE HOLE WAS BLOWN IN THE SIDE OF THE BANK, NO ATTEMPT WAS
MADE TO ROB IT. HE ALSO STRESSED THAT BY PICKING MILITARY BANK THE
TERRORISTS GAVE THE BOMBING A CLEAR POLITICAL INTENT. GOV.
CLAIMED TO HAVE INFORMATION THAT SEPARATISTS WOULD ATTEMPT TO INCREASE
ACTIVITIES IN URBAN AREAS AS PART OF AN EFFORT TO CONVINCE ARAB

COUNTRIES "ESPECIALLY LIBYA" OF THEIR STRENGTH AND TO ATTRACT INCREASED SUPPORT FROM THEM.

2. IN COURSE OF CONVERSATION GOV. REPEATEDLY CRITICIZED THE RTG FOR AS HE PUT IT ALLOWING THE MALAYSIANS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THAILAND IN IMPLEMENTING THE NEW BORDER AGREEMENT. HE SAID THAT NEW SPIRIT OF COOPERATION HAD RESULTED EXCLUSIVELY IN JOINT OPERATIONS AGAINST CPM. HE ARGUED THAT THESE OPERATIONS BENEFIT MALAYSIA MORE THAN THAILAND. GOV. RAISED TRADITIONAL ARGUMENT THAT REAL COOPERATION SHOULD ALSO INCLUDE ACTION AGAINST SEPARATISTS MANY OF WHOM TAKE REFUGE IN MALAYSIA. GOV. ESTIMATED THAT UP TO ONE HUNDRED SEPARATISTS REGULARLY CROSS OVER INTO THAILAND ON OPERATIONS AND THEN FLEE TO MALAYSIA WHERE THEY ARE NOT PURSUED. GOV SAID COOPERATION SHOULD ALSO EXTEND TO PROBLEMS LIKE SMUGGLING OF RICE AND SUGAR WHICH HE CLAIMED WERE BEING IGNORED. IN PARTICULARLY BITTER APPRAISAL OF THE REGIONAL BORDER COMMITTEE HEADQUARTERED IN SONGKHLA, GOV DESCRIBED IT AS A VEHICLE WHEREBY MALAYSIANS WERE AUTHORIZED TO SEND "SPIES" INTO THAILAND'S MUSLIM AREAS. HIS IMPLICATION WAS THAT INFORMATION GATHERED BY MALAYSIAN BORDER COMMITTEE MEMBERS WAS BEING MADE AVAILABLE TO SEPARATIST LEADERSHIP IN MALAYSIA.

3. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION ABOUT THREE VIETNAMESE NAVY TROOPS HELD IN PATTANI FOR 45 DAYS BEFORE BEING SENT TO SONGKHLA (SONGKHLA 98) GOV. SAID PATTANI OFFICIALS HAD FIRST TRIED TO QUESTION THEM IN CHINESE AND FRENCH BUT FOUND THEY SPOKE ONLY VIETNAMESE. HE SAID HIS REQUEST TO ISOC FOR A QUALIFIED INTERPRETER WAS IGNORED FOR OVER A MONTH SO HE FINALLY ORDERED THE MEN BE TAKEN TO SONGKHLA. (SONGKHLA POLICE INITIALLY TRIED TO PUT THE MEN IN THE REFUGEE CAMP
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BUT BACKED OFF IN FACE OF UPROAR OF OTHER REFUGEES WHO MADE THREATS ON THEIR LIVES.) GOV SAID THAT THE WRECKAGE OF AN UNMARKED SEA PLANE WHICH HE SAID HAD BEEN FOUND NEAR THE AREA WHERE THE THREE MEN WERE PICKED UP BY THAI FISHERMEN HAD BEEN SENT TO BANGKOK FOR ANALYSIS. HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT IF ANY CONNECTION THERE WAS BETWEEN THE THREE MEN AND THE PLANE BUT THOUGHT THE COINCIDENCE OF THE TIMING OF THEIR ARRIVAL AND THE CRASH (EARLY MARCH) WARRANTED FURTHER INVESTIGATION.

4. COMMENT: GOV. THERMSAK'S FEELING THAT THE THAI ARE BEING TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF IN MALAYSIAN BORDER COOPERATION IS SHARED BY A NUMBER OF MOI OFFICIALS IN THE SOUTH, ESPECIALLY THOSE IN THE MUSLIM PROVINCES WHERE SEPARATIST SANCTUARIES
N MALAYSIA ARE OFTEN OF
GREATER CONCERN THAN CPM SANCTUARIES IN THAILAND. IN EFFORT TO ATTACK SEPARATISTS WITHIN FRAMEWORK OF BORDER AGREEMENT, THERMSAK WHO IS A MUSLIM ADVOCATES THAT SEPARATISTS BE VIEWED AS A FRONT ORGANIZATION FOR COMMUNISTS AND THAT TERMS OF BORDER AGREEMENT WHICH PERMIT JOINT ACTION AGAINST CPM BE APPLIED TO SEPARATISTS

AS WELL.
HAMILTON UNQTE
WHITEHOUSE

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